



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

REPORT

Food and Drink Wales Industry Board: update from the Chair (December 2022)

The latest on the Welsh food and drink industry.

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As we near the end of another tumultuous year, let me start on a positive note with things we can celebrate!

In November, for the first time in their 22-year history, the BBC Food and Farming awards came to Cardiff which gave us a chance to spotlight our wonderful Welsh Food and Drink industry with key influencers and consumers from across the UK. At the same time, Wales also hosted the World Cheese Awards when over 4000 international cheeses competed for a plethora of highly coveted awards. To me, these both provide evidence that Welsh Food & Drink is now centre stage on the global food scene!

Whilst I am on the subject of celebration, I would like to recognise the work that has gone into the Welsh leek gaining PGI (Protected Geographical Indication) UK GI status which protects this iconic symbol of Wales from imitation and misuse.

I felt very emotional when many of us met again after two years of Covid at the swelteringly hot Royal Welsh Show in July. The show continues to reinforce the importance of food and drink in our culture in Wales and emphasises that we are a strong, unique and proud industry. It was inspiring to see the work that Sarah Lewis and her team at Lantra put into the Careers Hub which focused on the importance of attracting and retaining people into our industry by providing interesting and rewarding careers.

However, a big reality check. Whilst it is good to celebrate our success in 2022, we should recognise that our success is testament to the hard work of the many food and drink businesses we are lucky to have in Wales. I know things are tough for many businesses which continue to experience challenges including labour, energy and financial and I know these won't go away overnight. During a recent holiday in North Wales I met many food and drink businesses to understand first-hand your concerns, challenges and indeed opportunities. I valued these discussions, and I would welcome you to share your thoughts anytime by emailing me at Chair.FDWIB@gov.wales.

Ever the optimist, I am confident that the future is bright for the Welsh Food & Drink Industry. This enthusiasm isn't based on blind positivity, it's based on the fact that we continue to grow in scale, influence and sophistication. We have all the ingredients to succeed: great relationships, great innovation, great products and above all, great people.

As we enter 2023, I hope our industry will continue its record-breaking growth trajectory. Whilst this growth will continue to focus on the UK market largely because of Brexit and shortening global supply chains, I would love to see Welsh Food & Drink exports expanding to take advantage of the new trading world. We only export around 7% of our Food & Drink turnover in Wales and with the UK negotiating more and more trade deals we need to understand and leverage where Wales has competitive advantage in the global market. Importantly, we need to clearly articulate not just where we want to defend our interests, but we also need to explain and quantify where the opportunities lie to those negotiating trade deals on our behalf.

I would like to sign off by thanking all of those in the industry who have worked tirelessly this year to keep the nation fed and their businesses afloat under the current challenging business environment. We certainly have something special in Wales. Food and drink are two of our biggest assets and opportunities. I remain convinced that our collaborative spirit in Wales will see us through these difficult and challenging times and the Board will do all we can to maintain and develop this ethos through 2023.

Thank you for what you all continue to do for our amazing industry! As a Food & Drink Board we will continue to do all we can to support and advocate for you in 2023. I wish you all a happy Christmas filled with Welsh food and drink.

Andy Richardson, Chair of the Food and Drink Wales Industry Board

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